Transparent selection procedure for SC/HC judges

†1700. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of pending cases in different courts in the country, especially in High Courts and Supreme Court, as on date;

(b) whether the main reason for the pending cases is the shortage of judges in High Courts and Supreme Court;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government is planning to make the selection procedure of Judges in High Courts and Supreme Court simple, easy and transparent;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) by when the above plan is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) As per the information received from the Registry of the Supreme Court and the respective Registries of the High Courts, 50,659 matters were pending in the Supreme Court as on 1st June, 2009 and 3910858 cases were pending in the High Courts as on 31.12.2008.

(b) and (c) Vacancies of Judges in High Courts and Supreme Court is one of the reasons for pendency in these courts. As on 10th July, 2009, against an approved strength of 886 Judges in the High Courts, 237 were vacant and there were 7 vacancies of Judges in the Supreme Court against an approved strength of 31 Judges.

(d) to (f) The Government is preparing a road map for judicial reforms in the country for which consultations have already begun. A decision in the matter will be taken on completion of the consultation process.

Reforms in judiciary

1701. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to review present system of appointment of Judges and action against corrupt Judges;

(b) if so, the main reforms which are being considered in the judiciary;

(c) whether any constitutional amendment would be required for this;

(d) whether Government has also considered the views of Chief Justice of India (CJI) while making reforms in judiciary; and

(e) Whether CJI has also agreed that all Judges shall declare their assets provided they are given legal cover?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) to (d) The Government is in the process of preparing a road map for judicial reforms in the country. In this regard, the Government has begun to hold wide consultations. The judiciary would be associated in this exercise. A decision in the matter will be taken thereafter.

(e) In the Writ Petition (C) No.288 of 2009 before the Delhi High Court, it has been submitted by the Registrar General, Supreme Court of India that the Judges of the Supreme Court are not opposed to declaring their assets provided that such declarations are made in accordance with due procedure laid down by a law which would prescribe (a) the authority to which the declaration would be made; (b) the form in which the declaration would have to be made along with a clear definition of what constitutes 'assets'; and (c) proper safeguards, checks and balances to prevent misuse of the information which would be made available.

Corruption in judiciary

1702. SHRI MOHAMMED ADEEB:
SHRI SABIR ALI:
Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Punjab Vigilance Bureau has released some tapes depicting the touts talking about cases being fixed in the Punjab and Haryana High Court;

(b) whether the reports passed on to the Chief Justice of India disclosed malpractices in the judiciary and manipulation in the High Court Registry through touts, which hint at arrangement-cum-purchase of judicial orders appointments, etc.;

(c) if so, what are the facts in this regard; and

(d) what is Government's scheme to eradicate corruption in judiciary?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) to (c) As per information received from the Supreme Court of India, the reports forwarded by the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court were not authenticated.

(d) The Government is considering bringing a legislation for greater accountability of the Higher Judiciary. In respect of the subordinate judiciary, the responsibility rests with the respective High Courts and the State Governments.

Pending cases in Supreme Court

1703. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the pendency of cases in Supreme Court has been steadily increasing from 34,649 in 2006 to 50,163 as on March 31,2009;

(b) if so, the details of the cases pending, new cases filed, disposal off and pending, year-wise since 2006; and

(c) the steps being taken to reduce the backlog of pending cases?